

Top Secret

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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

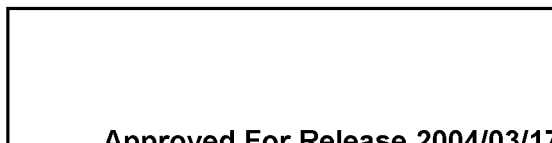
MEMORANDUM

The Situation in Vietnam

Top Secret

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1 May 1967



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Information as of 1600
1 May 1967

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HIGHLIGHTS

US Marines and elements of the North Vietnamese Army 341st Division have been engaged in intermittent heavy fighting in western Quang Tri Province near the Laotian border.

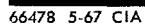
I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam:
Intermittent heavy fighting has been reported since 25 April between US Marines and probable elements of the 341st NVA Division near Khe Sanh in western Quang Tri Province (Paras. 1-4). The Viet Cong may have formed a new military region encompassing Binh Long, Phuoc Long, and Quang Duc provinces, according to recently captured enemy documents (Paras. 5-7). Changing weather conditions have been noted to affect military operations in South Vietnam (Paras. 8-12).

II. Political Developments in South Vietnam:
Police Director Loan has been entrusted with the job of conveying the Directorate's views concerning the election laws to the Constituent Assembly (Paras. 1-2). The first phase of local elections came to a successful end on 30 April (Para. 3).

III. Military Developments in North Vietnam:
DRV airfields at Hoa Lac and Kep were struck again on 1 May (Paras. 1-5). A SAM site near the DMZ has been destroyed (Para. 6).

IV. Other Communist Military Developments:
There is nothing of significance to report.

V. Communist Political Developments: Chinese issue propaganda attack on Moscow's alleged role in trying to negotiate a Vietnamese settlement (Paras. 1-2).



I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. Elements of two US Marine battalions have consolidated their positions in western Quang Tri Province after five days of sporadic heavy fighting with North Vietnamese Army (NVA) regulars some six miles northwest of Khe Sanh.

2. The action first erupted on 25 April when a US Marine engineer convoy participating in Operation PRAIRIE IV was ambushed by an estimated NVA battalion along Route 9 near Khe Sanh. The convoy was reinforced by additional marine units, and a local search-and-destroy operation was initiated in the area northwest of Khe Sanh near the Laotian border.

3. Subsequent contact was made with a heavily entrenched NVA force--tentatively identified as elements of the 32nd Regiment/341st NVA Division--commanding three strategic hills astride key infiltration routes from Laos into the area immediately northwest of Khe Sanh. The marines, supported by B-52 raids, tactical air strikes, and heavy artillery bombardment, occupied one of the hills on 28 April with minimum enemy resistance, but a major battle developed during the next three days for control of the remaining two peaks.

4. As of 1 May, fighting in the area had diminished to light and sporadic mortar, automatic weapons, and small-arms fire. According to preliminary casualty reports, the five-day series of engagements cost the Communists nearly 200 killed, in contrast to American casualties of 73 killed and 209 wounded.

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Probable New Viet Cong Military Region

5. A number of documents captured during the past few months suggest that the Viet Cong may have formed a new military region or subregion called "K," encompassing Binh Long, Phuoc Long, and Quang Duc provinces.

6. A Viet Cong notebook, containing entries taken during an October 1966 meeting, suggests that the region was formed primarily to establish a large, secure base area and to safeguard Communist communications between South Vietnam and North Vietnam. In addition, the notebook indicates that the 7th North Vietnamese Army Division is responsible for military operations in the area, with orders to expand guerrilla activities and gain control of GVN land development centers, rubber plantations, and other facilities along the Cambodian-Vietnamese border.

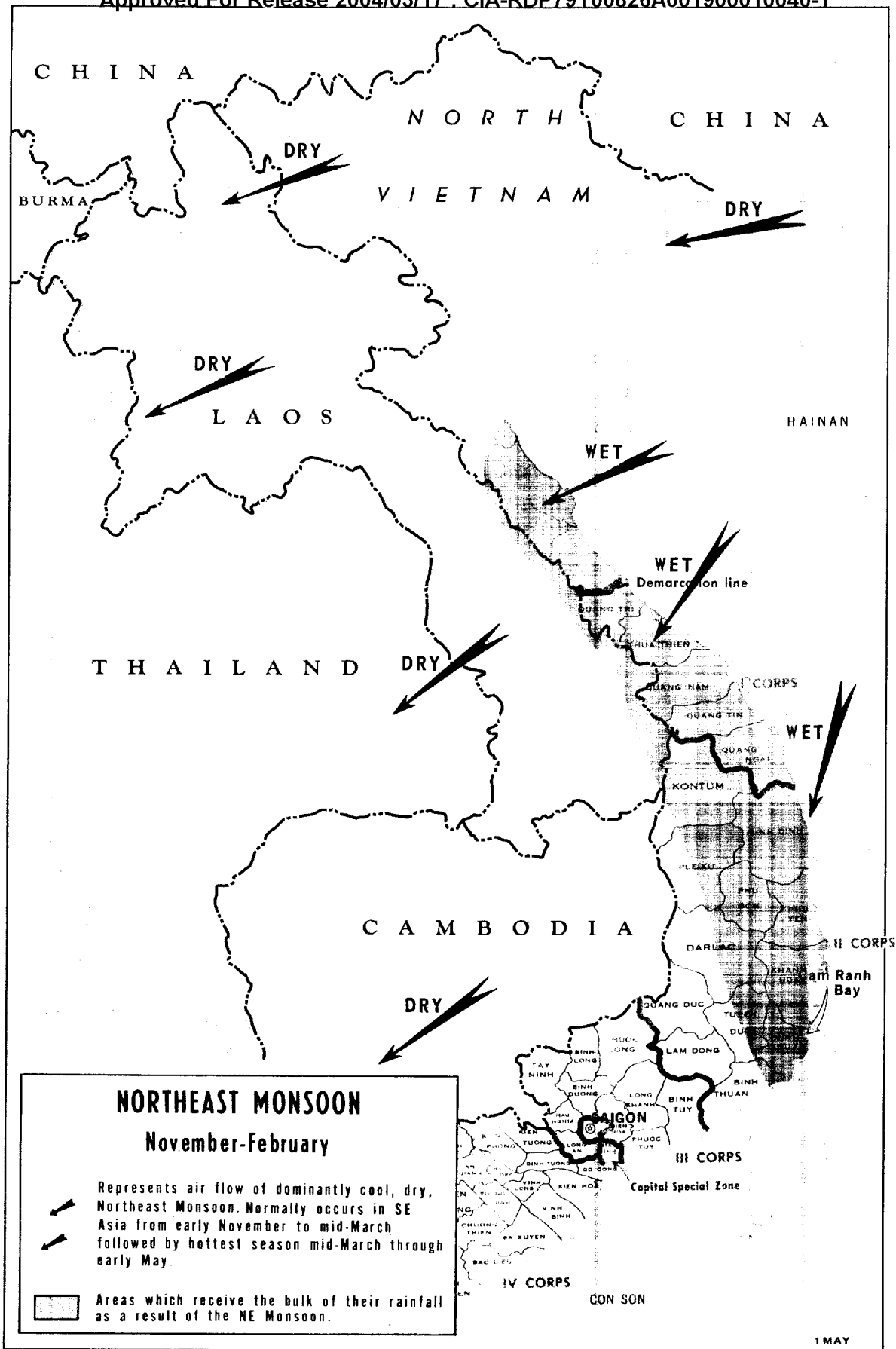
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Weather Conditions As They Affect Military Operations

8. The "northeast monsoon" season, which brings heavy cloud cover and rains to the northern half of South Vietnam during the winter months, has ended. Cloudy weather, fog, and rainshowers frequently persist in the spring months, however, and were prevalent last week from the northern I Corps area to Cam Ranh Bay in II Corps. Usually, about this time of year, increased visibility permits more effective close air support for allied infantry forces.

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9. Weather conditions in the northern area throughout the summer months are normally quite clear and dry. Despite the further advantage which this weather brings to allied operations, various reports indicate that Viet Cong and North Vietnamese regulars intend to conduct major operations in the northern provinces this summer. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] that road conditions greatly improve and living and fighting in the field is much easier for Viet Cong ground troops during the dry season. [REDACTED] these considerations outweigh the danger of allied air attacks.

10. Meanwhile, in the southern half of South Vietnam, the "southwest monsoon" generally brings heavy rains beginning in mid-May and continuing throughout the summer. During the summer, weather conditions in the Mekong Delta and along the southwest slopes of the central highlands will be unfavorable for close air support operations and for ground combat in general. Increasing cloudiness and rain activity are already being noted in the III and IV Corps areas, and in the highlands area of II Corps.

11. The different weather conditions in the northern and southern portions of South Vietnam are explained by changes in the prevailing winds which affect the entire Southeast Asian peninsula. During the winter, winds from the northeast passing over the Gulf of Tonkin absorb moisture which causes rains only in the exposed eastern coastal region (see map). During the summer, the prevailing winds arise in the southwest. Passing over the Gulf of Siam, these winds bring rains throughout most of Southeast Asia, except for the northern half of South Vietnam--which is protected by the western highlands. Saigon, Hanoi, and the western central highlands experience the same rainy and dry season, while the reverse season prevails simultaneously in I Corps and the northeastern part of II Corps.

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12. A small part of the Laotian infiltration corridor, along the Laos-Vietnam border, is affected by the northeast monsoon. The heaviest rains in Southern Laos, however, are those associated with the summer southwest monsoon. These rains have arrived early this year

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there is flooding already on parts of Laotian Routes 911, 23 (north of Route 9), and 912, which may have already begun to impede North Vietnamese infiltration and resupply movements.

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II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. Police director General Loan, has replaced General Nguyen Bao Tri as the official government liaison man with the Constituent Assembly.

25X1. [redacted] he held meetings with most of the military deputies on 27 and 28 April. Loan reportedly mixed flattery with threats in an attempt to convince the deputies to adopt election provisions that would favor the government candidate. Specifically, he urged them to block a provision for a runoff between the presidential candidates with the largest pluralities, to hold to the election of the president and the upper legislative house on the same day, and to require each voter to vote for only one list in the upper house elections.

2. Whether or not [redacted] Loan was substituted for Tri because the latter is suspected to be supporting Chief of State Thieu for president, it appears that Premier Ky and other Directorate members are deeply concerned with the contents of the presidential election regulations currently under assembly debate. The military probably feel that their ability to retain power under the form of a representative government is directly tied to the election laws. Loan's reported exhortations to the military deputies are consistent with the efforts of Le Phuoc Sang, a pro-Ky civilian deputy, to influence the character of the presidential election law. Although Loan met with apparent success in his representations among the military assemblymen, he will probably stir up considerable ill-will in using similar heavy-handed tactics with the civilian deputies.

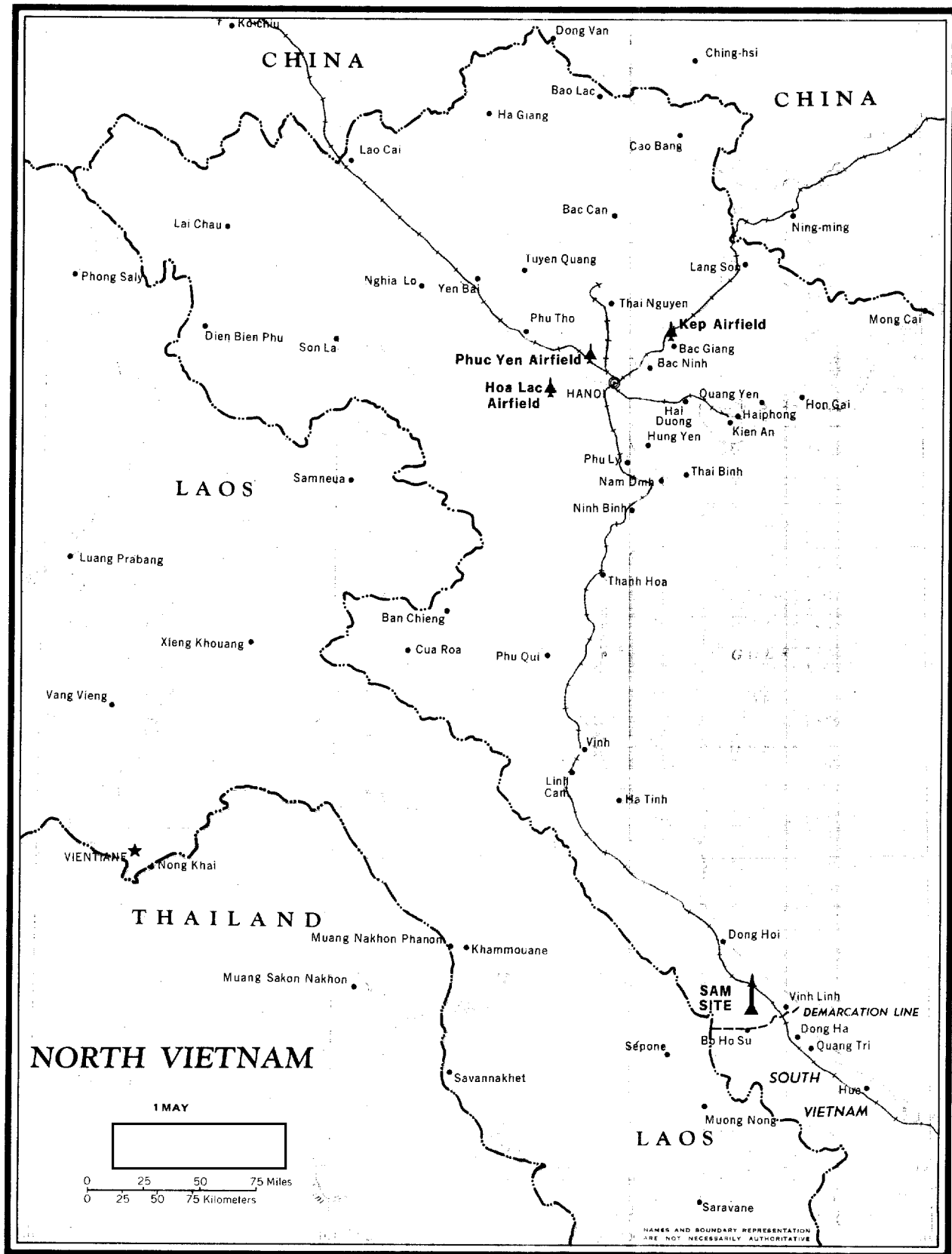
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Local Elections

3. The first phase of the election of village councils ended on 30 April. Some 2,500,000 voters--77 percent of those registered--elected local councils in 984 villages, amid scattered Viet Cong harassment of candidates and polling places. Phase II will now begin on 1 July and will continue indefinitely as the local security situation permits.

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III. NORTH VIETNAMESE MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

1. US Air Force and Navy aircraft again struck the North Vietnamese MIG fighter bases at Hoa Lac and Kep on 1 May. No US aircraft were lost.

2. Hoa Lac Airfield, west of Hanoi, was struck [redacted] Initial pilot reports indicate that 14 aircraft parked on the ground at Hoa Lac were either destroyed or heavily damaged. [redacted] had disclosed 14 aircraft at the base--13 MIG-17s and one MIG-15.

3. Air force pilots reported engaging eight MIG fighters in the vicinity of Hoa Lac. One MIG was shot down. The pilots also claim considerable damage to Hoa Lac's taxiing strip, revetted parking areas and administrative and support areas. Numerous secondary explosions and fires were observed throughout the parking area. Despite these reports, Hoa Lac may still be serviceable since the primary runway was apparently not cratered. Initial readout of the [redacted] photography showed the field to be serviceable at that time.

4. Navy A4Cs hit the Kep Airfield, northeast of Hanoi. Pilots report that all bombs were in the target area. A preliminary field readout of the results of a reconnaissance mission flown after the strike showed three MIG-17s burning at the field while 13 others in various areas were apparently undamaged. There was no damage to the runway discernible in the photography. Four airborne MIGs were engaged by navy pilots during the attack. Two MIGs were confirmed as having been shot down while the other two were possibly shot down.

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SAM Site Near DMZ Destroyed

6. The surface-to-air missile (SAM) site photographed [] some 15 kilometers north of the Demilitarized Zone was destroyed the next day by a combination of some 90 air sorties, eight-inch naval gunfire and 175-mm. artillery fire from locations across the DMZ in South Vietnam. Pilots reported that their bombs impacted on each of the six suspected launch sites with numerous secondary explosions. Several antiaircraft artillery sites near the SAM installation were also reported destroyed.

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IV. OTHER COMMUNIST MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

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V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

1. An authoritative People's Daily "Observer" article on 30 April seems primarily aimed at ridiculing recent appeals by high-level Soviet leaders at the East German party congress and the Karlovy Vary conference, calling for "united action" on Vietnam by all Socialist countries including China. The "Observer" article contains a cleverly contrived chronology of alleged attempts over the past two years by the US and the Soviet Union to force Hanoi's capitulation through so-called "peace talks." The article gloomily forecast that if Hanoi should follow Moscow's advice by renouncing its national aspirations and abandoning its compatriots in the South, then "there would be the danger that socialist North Vietnam will be lost too."

2. The "Observer" article avoided any discussion of a reported new agreement between Moscow and Peking on the transit across China of Soviet military aid to North Vietnam. By its tone and content, however, the article makes it clear that the significance of possible new working arrangements should not be exaggerated.

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